Importance Of Forage Stressed by Scientists

"Feed all the forage a dairy cow will eat, then complete her needs with concentrates."

That has been a basic recommendation for 20 years, says Dr. V. L. Baldwin, associate dairy specialist at VPI. The practice has been proven sound, the principle is simple. But many dairymen have failed to follow it.

Forage is the cheapest source of feed, but the average Virginia dairyman keeping dairy herd improvement association records has shown no net change in barn fed forage in the past five years. During the same period the amount of concentrates fed each DHIA cow in Virginia has increased less than 100 pounds. The increase in concentrates alone cannot explain the increase of 1,130 pounds per DHIA cow in milk production during the same period, Dr. Baldwin says. The increased milk production might be explained by better use of pasture, better forage quality, or possibly better use of feed by the cattle.

Dr. Baldwin advances three possible reasons to explain the low total increase in use of forage. There may not be enough good quality forage produced on dairy farms. Improved agronomic practices and more acres in forage can solve this problem. The forage figures are hard to estimate and may be inaccurately reported by farmers to the DHIA supervisor. Or perhaps not enough dairymen believe they can increase income by greater use of forage. A little pencil and common sense should dispel this doubt, Dr. Baldwin says.

For example, the daily needs of a 1000-pound cow producing 40 pounds of 4 percent milk daily can be met by a high forage-low concentrate or a low forage-high concentrate ration, such as: 15 pounds hay equivalent and 17 pounds concentrate per cow per day; or 30 pounds hay equivalent and 7 pounds concentrate per cow per day. If the forage intake consists of 40 percent pasture, 40 percent silage, and 20 percent alfalfa hay, and both the forage and concentrate are largely home grown, the actual cost for the first ration for 40 cows for a year would be around $7,700, for the second ration around $4,400. In this example high forage consumption would give a $3,300 saving on 40 cows in one year. Larger cows producing the same amount of milk could eat more forage and realize an even larger saving.

Many dairymen have not been able to get their cows to eat more forage. This is the most likely reason for the lower-than-desirable rate of forage consumption, Dr. Baldwin says. There are ways to increase the amount cows will eat. Dr. Baldwin says to produce higher quality forage. Cows will eat twice as much top quality as poor forage, and will get more nutrients per pound. Place forage before cows more often. Self-feeding, properly done, can increase consumption. Make forage more attractive to the cow. A cow prefers fresh feed. Too much feed placed in a feed bunk at one time may become stale and picked over. Self feeding works best when cows can uncover what they will clean up before reaching for more. The higher the quality better the cow likes her forage.

Provide plenty of water to go with the forage. The dryer the feed, the more water is necessary.

Plan to increase forage production and quality next year, Dr. Baldwin says. You can't feed cows extra forage if you don't have it. The cows may eat more, so the total feed bill may be larger, but so will production and profits.

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CANNIBALISM MAY BE POULTRY PROBLEM

Mistreatment of birds low on the social scale may be a problem even in the best of poultry families.

R. Wesley, poultry specialist at VPI, says feather picking or cannibalism can cause down-grading and deaths in the flock. With the already low prices being received for poultry and poultry products, producers can't afford to lose profits because of cannibalism.

All the causes of cannibalism are not known, but Wesley lists a few. They include overcrowding, wet litter, lack of certain vitamins, proteins, or salt in the diet, and high temperatures. Certain breeds are more cannibalistic than others.

There are several things a poultryman can do to prevent cannibalism. Usually, light breeds of chickens are debeaked before the one-day-old chicks are delivered from the hatchery. Some hatcheries debeak all chickens sold regardless of breed or variety. Debeaking all birds is probably the best way of combating cannibalism.

Most poultrymen include a vitamin A supplement in the rations. Research has shown that lack of vitamin A in poultry rations promotes cannibalism.

Be sure the birds are not overcrowded. Allow at least 2-3.5 square feet of floor space per bird for light breeds and 3 square feet of floor space for the heavier breeds.

Ventilation is the key to dry litter. Make arrangements to let moisture-laden air escape without causing a draft on the chickens. This is best done by providing an adjustable ridge ventilator, which can be opened or closed as needed. Some poultrymen are adding fans for forced ventilation.

Too little salt or protein in the diet also may cause feather picking and cannibalism. Adding salt to the rations will help if cannibalism is a problem.

The physical form in which feed is fed to chickens can have an effect. In tests switching from all all-pelleted to an all-mash ration has decreased cannibalism. The reason for this is not known, but scientists believe that the bird's desire to peck is satisfied through the increased pecking necessary to eat mash.

U. S.-POLISH TRADE

The United States will sell Poland 200,000 tons of fodder grains to help overcome her drastic meat shortage.

The sale, which has been negotiated under Public Law 480 governing the disposal of United States surplus agricultural products, is expected to be announced in Warsaw and Washington.

Civilization may be the product of the world, but it depends very largely upon the United States for its present defense.

Clean Spray, Dusting Gear Before Storage

A few last jobs of tidying-up are left for the home gardener.

S. B. Fenne, plant pathologist at VPI, says sprayers should be washed out carefully to remove spray residues. A weak vinegar solution will help get rid of the spray materials. After thoroughly washing the sprayer, coat the tank and other metal parts with a thin covering of oil, and hang sprayer in a dry location.

Do not wash out a duster. Instead carefully remove the dust with a stiff brush. Some of the outside metal parts might be oiled. However, be careful not to get oil inside the duster because that might cause caking of dust next season. Hang the duster in a dry place for storage.

Most of the left-over chemicals can be used next year if they are stored in a dry place in air-tight containers. Be careful to label them correctly so you won't make any mistakes in using them next year. A good way to store chemicals is to put them in a glass fruit jar which can be sealed tightly. Be sure to put them out of the reach of children and animals.

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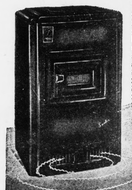

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MANDATORY INSPECTION ASSURES HOUSEWIVES OF QUALITY PRODUCT

Homemakers in Virginia — and elsewhere — can buy poultry with a high degree of confidence these days.

Dr. A. T. Ringrose, associate poultry specialist at VPI, points out that most of the chickens bought now have been inspected for wholesomeness before leaving the processing plant. The Poultry Inspection Act made it mandatory, beginning last January 1, for all poultry shipped across state lines to be inspected. The law also provides for official supervision of sanitation and plant procedures. All processing plants that ship poultry across state lines are required by law to meet a high standard in all facilities. Buildings must be sound, sanitary and easily cleaned. Equipment must be rust-proof. Employees who handle or come in contact with edible products are closely supervised. All water used in an inspected plant is tested regularly.

Fresh-dressed, ice-packed chickens are usually shipped in wooden boxes which carry the inspection stamp. The birds are removed at the retail store and packaged in trays or other suitable containers for sale. Giblets are cleaned separately and are usually transferred from one location to another in the plant by a flowing stream of cold water. As soon as the dressing room process is finished the birds and giblets are submerged in slush ice where they stay for two hours or more. When they are removed from their ice bath, they are placed on an automatic weighing and sizing machine that classifies them according to weight. They are then packed in boxes and stored in a cool room at temperatures of around 33 degrees. They are transported as rapidly and as often as possible in refrigerated truck a few hours after they were received at the processing plant.

Modern automatic processing equipment makes it possible to turn out a greater quantity of birds with much less labor than a few years ago.

Processing plants in Virginia kill, dress, and eviscerate over 185 million pounds of broiler-fryer chickens each year, Dr. Ringrose says.

INSECTS STILL ACTIVE IN STATE

Several insects are still causing trouble in various areas of Virginia, even though cold weather has generally slowed down activity.

White peach scales are heavy on privet hedges in some areas. To control this species now, VPI entomologists suggest the use of a strong solution of malathion—about 1 table spoon per gallon of water. Recheck the plants in the spring and spray again if crawlers are present.

Magnolia scale is troublesome on some magnolia trees. It can be controlled by spraying during the dormant season with a 2 or 3 percent oil spray when the temperature is above 40 degrees. Be sure to wet all twigs for good control.

HYBRID VIGOR SOUGHT IN SHEEP INDUSTRY

"Hybrid vigor" is a term that's been used a lot in many phases of farming.

Now it's assuming new importance as applied to sheep.

Animal husbandry scientists at Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station explain that crossbred "western" ewes, produced by breeding either Hampshire or Suffolk rams to grade range ewes of fine wool breeding, are among the most popular and widely used "stock" for replacement ewes in Virginia commercial sheep flocks. The question has arisen as to what breed of ram should be used on these crossbred ewes, and more particularly, whether or not to use a ram of a third breed.

The answer to this question is the aim of an experiment in progress at the Southwest Virginia Experiment Station at Glade Spring. Thirty Suffolk x Ramboullet and 30 Hampshire x Ramboullet ewes have figured in the three years of the test. Each year four rams are used, two Hampshires and two Suffolks. One half of each kind of ewes are mated to Suffolk rams and one half to Hampshire rams. Thus half of the lambs are three breed crosses and half are back crosses.

The three-breed cross lambs have had somewhat faster daily gains than did the back crosses. This difference, while apparently small, will amount to lambs three or four pounds heavier at market age. No appreciable difference has been noted in either live or carcass grades, but the three-breed crosses had a higher average dressing percentage than the back-cross lambs.

So the scientists conclude that additional hybrid vigor in growth rate can be expected when a ram of a third breed is used on cross-bred ewes.

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